



BIR

Bureau of International
Recycling

BIR is the international trade association of the recycling industries. Around 60 countries are represented through their national trade associations and individual companies which are involved in recycling. BIR comprises four commodity divisions: iron and steel, non ferrous metals, paper and textiles, and has committees dealing with stainless steel and special alloys, plastics and rubber. BIR's primary goals are to promote recycling and recyclability, thereby conserving natural resources, protecting the environment and facilitating free trade of secondary raw materials.

PRESS RELEASE

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BIR Autumn Round-Table Sessions Brussels, Belgium 30-31 October 2006

Textiles Division: Possible solution to finance sorting costs

There was animated debate at the latest BIR Textiles Round-Table meeting over a proposal in France to draw "contributions" from producers of new clothing, footwear and household textiles in order to help support recycling activities. This new approach could come into effect as early as next year.

A crisis in the textiles recycling sector has led to the collapse of several collection and sorting operations in France. The social and environmental impact of these company closures had prompted the authorities to take a closer look at the problems facing the sector, explained Mehdi Zerroug of Framimex. A working group has identified the falling quality of originals and the increasing volume of sorted material consigned to incineration as one of the main reasons for the sector's plight. The group had proposed that those responsible for producing new clothing, footwear and household textiles and for putting them on the market should make a financial contribution equivalent to around one thousandth of the sales price of the finished product. This would apply both to goods manufactured in France and to imports.

Under the proposal, these contributions would be directed through an environmental

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body in which textiles recycling companies would adopt an advisory role. Money would be distributed “on the basis of objective criteria”, observed Pierre Duponchel of French socio-economic group Le Relais. This initiative was a testament, he said, to the collaboration of not only commercial textiles companies, but also charity organisations and socio-economic groups. “It is doubtful we would have achieved this without working together,” he declared.

Concern was voiced at the Round-Table that the scheme might strengthen the role of socio-economic groups to the potential detriment of traditional textiles recyclers. However, BIR Textiles Division General Delegate Alexander Glaser of Fachverband Textil-Recycling e.V. in Germany said the French were to be congratulated on “getting the producers round the table”. Terry Ralph of Terimpex Ltd in the UK argued that mistrust between traditional textiles recyclers, charity organisations and socio-economic groups “has to be demolished”.

In his UK market report, Mr Ralph confirmed that higher prices had been obtained for second-hand clothing sales into Sub Saharan Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia, but that “the increases have by no means kept up with the price increases of originals”. And he added: “We feel a ceiling has been reached for many of our foreign customers, and these markets are no longer able to face more price increases.”

Reporting on conditions in the French market, Mr Zerroug suggested that rising collection volumes were still failing to match demand. For Belgium, Pol T’Jollyn of NV Recutex pointed to “very strong” demand from Eastern Europe and North Africa, but also to an inability to increase selling prices to offset higher buying costs. According to BIR Textiles Division Honorary President Klaus Lower of Hans Lower Recycling GmbH in Germany, sorters in Japan were complaining of high disposal fees for material that could not be marketed. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of US sorting activity had “migrated” to India and the Far East.

Earlier, BIR Textiles Division President Frithjof W. Schepke of Schepke Konzepte in Germany had underlined the impressive employment record of the textiles recycling sector. However, the industry remained in a “structural crisis” and was forced to contend with ever-rising costs of collection, sorting, packing and transportation.

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